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## ABSTRACT

A study was made of the reactions of 544 Tallahassee high school students to a public television series, "Today in the Legislature", which presented segments of a session of the state legislature of Florida in six 50-minute programs. The main goal was to determine the major effect of mass media on political knowledge and its influence on political attitudes and participation. It was found that although the experimental students were not overly excited about the television coverage, they had more positive attitudes about the legislature and the manner in which the sessions were conducted. Only 12% found the program interesting while twice as many felt they were dull. Among the other major findings were: interest in the political system increased after viewing, particularly among the younger and black viewers; interpersonal discussion about politics with parents and peers increased; reading about state legislature in the newspapers increased; and greater political knowledge was gained, particularly among younger, white viewers. The impact of the programs was uniform among students differing in scholastic ability, political interest, and communication behavior. The research findings are summarized in 11 tables. (Author/DS)

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PUBLIC TELEVISION AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

A field experiment on the impact of a public television series on the political knowledge, attitudes and communication behaviors of adolescents.

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A joint publication of the Department of Communication, Michigan State University, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

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Final report

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## PROLOGUE

During April, May and early June, 1973, the public broadcasting system in Florida televised approximately 40 one-hour evening programs based on that day's session in the state legislature. The shows were created to make the public aware of political issues, bills, committee hearings, and the general functioning of the state legislature. This was done as part of Florida's Sunshine Act, designed to minimize secrecy in the administration of public business.

Such programming may generate many questions, particularly in the light of current Washington hearings on the merits of televising sessions of Congress. This particular study focused on one of those questions -- the likely political socialization of youngsters as a function of exposure to some segments of this television series on public affairs. The project examined the nature of the series' impact on high school students' knowledge about politics, attitudes toward legislative activities and legislators, political interest and the students' resultant political communication behavior.

This report will first summarize what prior research suggests are the likely agents of political socialization and how the media have been shown to affect political attitudes and behaviors. Specific hypotheses will be generated for this study, and the results presented. The final section discusses some implications of these results.

## Political Socialization

The survival of a society requires that new members be taught the basic social patterns and values of that system. The socialization process usually involves the young person's learning of appropriate orientations through such formal and informal agencies as the school and family.

Political socialization is a developmental process by which children and adolescents acquire cognitions, attitudes and behaviors relating to their political environment (Hyman, 1959; Langton, 1969; Hess and Torney, 1967). Several societal agents have been identified as key transmitters of political orientations from generation to generation: parents, schools, peers, and the mass media.

Political socialization is one of the newest and most active areas of social science research. Herbert Hyman provided the main impetus for this developing field with his 1959 book that empirically examined how children learn patterns of political participation, party identification, ideology, and authoritarianism. Later researchers have studied the roots of political efficacy, interest, trust, knowledge, information-seeking, and electoral behavior. Most scholars agree that political orientations acquired in childhood have important implications for adult behavior (Cook and Scioli, 1972).

Research shows that the socialization process typically begins with abstract emotional attachments and identification with political figures and institutions in the elementary school years. These vague affective allegiances are supplemented with specific knowledge during adolescence, when the child develops a more rational understanding of his political world

(Greenstein, 1965a). Some researchers argue that political socialization is really a continuous life-long process, with adult political experiences constantly reshaping previously learned orientations (Brim and Wheeler, 1966; Prewitt, Eulau and Zisk, 1966-67). Nevertheless, the primary emphasis in the field has been on pre-adult stages of learning.

Political scientists have proposed a number of frameworks for conceptualizing this process. Easton and Hess (1962) approached political socialization from a systems theory perspective. Their parsimonious input-output conversion model posits various demands and supports as the primary inputs to the political system. One important means of support is the continuous socialization of incoming participants to the political process.

A similar macro-level emphasis has been used by scholars working from Parsons' structural-functional theory (Mitchell, 1962; Almond and Verba, 1963). This perspective holds that a key element in societal pattern maintenance is conformity to prescriptions of the cultural system. Therefore, youth must be inculcated with a desire to fulfill role expectations of society concerning normative political behavior. Langton (1969) points out that the socialization process occasionally may serve as a vehicle for system change rather than invariably maintaining traditional norms and values.

Most political scientists have taken the individual as the primary unit of analysis in an attempt to explain the child's acquisition of political cognitions, attitudes and behaviors. Greenstein (1965b) has provided the most useful micro-level scheme in his rephrasing of Lasswell's basic question: Who learns what from whom under what circumstances with what effects? The current research literature has generally focused on several agents influencing certain cognitive, affective and behavioral dependent variables for various subgroups of pre-adults.

Family: Early political socialization research focused narrowly on the family as the major agent of political learning. Researchers studying dimensions of "national character" discovered that dominant psychological patterns of early family training within societies were associated with subsequent styles of political behavior during adulthood (Mead, 1951). The family environment appears to play an important role in the development of certain political variables such as party identification, knowledge, participation, and efficacy (Hyman, 1959; Greenstein, 1965b; Dawson, 1966; Chaffee, McLeod and Wackman, 1973). Nevertheless, recent scholars have presented evidence which indicates that the potency of parental influence is overrated, particularly regarding the transmission of partisan attitudes and opinions across generations (Jennings and Neimi, 1968; Hess and Torney, 1967; Connell, 1972). While the family impact can be pervasive early in life, this influence is so temporally removed from adult political behavior that such initial experiences may be irrelevant or their effects may dissipate over time.

School: The second major agent of socialization examined in the research literature has been the school. According to Hess and Torney (1967), the elementary school plays a crucial role in teaching conceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about the operation of the political system: "The school stands out as the central, salient, and dominant force in the political socialization of the young child." This conclusion may not be applicable to older students, however. Langton (1969) reports compelling evidence that formal 'civics' training in the secondary school has a minimal impact on most socialization indices. Since the present study deals with political learning at the high school level, the role of the civics course will be explored in greater detail below.

Other Socialization Agencies: Peers, work groups, political parties, labor unions, and religious institutions seem to have little influence over the individual's basic socialization into a political system. The peer group influence is probably the most significant among these sub-agents, as indicated by the long-term attitude changes found among Bennington College women who identified with a liberal reference group in the college community (Newcomb, 1963).

Until the 1970's, most researchers did not consider the mass media as a potential agent of political socialization. Those few studies which included mass media variables actually treated exposure to political content as a dependent index of socialization rather than a causal agent contributing to the political learning process. Chaffee, Ward and Tipton (1970) speculate that the basis for ignoring the media role was the classic research evidence which showed that mass communication had limited effects on adult voting behavior. They argue that it is inappropriate to apply these principles to pre-adult socialization, where a young person is forming rather than defending political predispositions.

Recent investigations indicate that the mass media may have an important impact on many socialization criteria. Before examining these studies, research on the amount of exposure to media public affairs messages will be examined. It first must be established that children and adolescents do come in regular contact with those mass media sources which describe and evaluate the political environment.

#### Exposure to Mass Media Political Content

The young child's first experience with mass media political information typically occurs in elementary school when he begins viewing national



news programs. In a survey of 700 Michigan school children, Atkin and Gantz (1974) found that 24% of the kindergarten and first grade students reported watching the network newscasts "almost every day" and 29% watched "sometimes." The proportions steadily increase throughout grade school, with almost three-fourths of the fifth graders seeing these newscasts at least sometimes. Local news programming is viewed by a similar proportion of grade school students. The Saturday morning mini-newscasts specially designed for the child audience have also gained many viewers since being introduced in 1971. In the Atkin study, one-third of the younger children and more than half of the older elementary students watched the CBS "In the News" broadcasts on a regular basis.

They found that boys viewed substantially more news programming than girls, although black and white children did not differ in exposure. No differences were discovered between students who performed well in school and those who received fair or poor grades.

McLeod, Atkin and Chaffee (1972) studied the exposure patterns of almost 500 seventh and tenth graders in Maryland schools. Their data showed that 69% of these students watched national news broadcasts at least sometimes, and 60% of them sometimes viewed such current events programs as "Sixty Minutes." Only 22% watched interview shows like "Meet the Press." Males viewed somewhat more than females, and exposure increased slightly with age. These students frequently listened to radio newscasts, with 40% hearing one or two per day and 43% listening to three or more.

McIntyre and Teevan (1972) found that half of their Maryland senior high school sample watched television news at least two or three times per week. Males viewed more than females, and blacks saw more news than whites. There were no social class differences detected in this sample.

In a study of 1300 junior and senior high school students in Wisconsin, McLeod, O'Keefe and Wackman (1969) reported similar levels of exposure to television public affairs content. Again, males viewed more heavily than females, and older students watched a greater amount than younger students. Using this same sample, Chaffee, Ward and Tipton (1970) found this male-female difference in exposure to 1968 campaign coverage on television. There were only slight age differences for campaign news.

Research indicates that public affairs newspaper use begins somewhat later, but becomes widespread by high school. Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) discovered daily newspaper reading among 51% of the sixth graders and 69% of the tenth graders in several Rocky Mountain communities. In another sample of San Francisco students, daily newsreading increased from 48% in eighth grade to 66% in twelfth grade.

The Schramm, Lyle and Parker results showed little difference between males and females in readership. Those students with higher mental ability were considerably more exposed than less intelligent youngsters in the sixth grade, but this gap decreased by the tenth grade. White-collar children were somewhat heavier readers than those from blue-collar backgrounds.

Specific readership of national news increased steadily with age in San Francisco, from 2% in the second grade to 20% in eighth grade to 36% in twelfth grade. None of the second graders read editorials, but 10% read these in eighth grade and 22% were exposed among the twelfth graders. Similar increases were shown for foreign news and local news. Almost two-fifths of the twelfth grade students cited one of the "hard news" categories as the part of the newspaper they would miss the most.

Chaffee, Ward and Tipton (1970) also found moderate exposure to serious news content during the 1968 campaign. Readership of the front page, political news, and Vietnam war news was significantly higher for the senior high school students than the junior high students.

A survey of sixth and ninth graders in Wisconsin by McLeod, Atkin and Chaffee (1972) showed that three-fourths read the newspaper every day. Among readers, 62% read the front page, 39% read local news, and 13% read editorial columnists. Exposure to each of these categories was higher for older students.

#### Effects of Exposure to Political Content

These studies of children's mass media usage patterns demonstrate a considerable amount of exposure to politically relevant information, especially in older age groups. Unlike parents and schools, the mass media do not produce messages with the intent of politically socializing young members of society. Nevertheless, youth's customary contact with public affairs content in newspapers and television provides an opportunity for important informal learning from mass media sources. What are the consequences of political exposure for the socialization process?

The most significant investigation of this issue was conducted by Chaffee, Ward and Tipton (1970), who administered questionnaires to 1300 adolescents in both May and November of the 1968 presidential campaign. They found that public affairs media exposure was correlated moderately with level of political knowledge and with campaigning activity at each point in time. Examining cross-lagged correlations across the six-month period, they discovered that public affairs media use in May correlated +.33 with November political knowledge, and +.24 with November campaign activity. The

knowledge correlation exceeded both the opposite time-order relationship and a "baseline" figure representing chance association, indicating a causal influence. However, the evidence for impact on campaign activity is somewhat less conclusive. Their findings show that viewing of news specials and national news programs on television and reading of national and world affairs news in the daily newspaper both contribute to political socialization, with the newspaper influence slightly stronger.

In addition, Chaffee et al. asked students to rate the four primary socialization agents according to degree of importance in providing both information and personal opinion on two specific current topics. On the basis of self-reports on six-step rating scales, the mass media were clearly the most important information source (mean = 5.6), substantially above teachers (3.9), parents (3.3), and friends (2.6). As a source of opinion, the advantage still accrued to the media (4.5), followed by parents (3.3), teachers (3.2) and friends (2.5). Furthermore, students who relied primarily on the mass media scored substantially higher on the political knowledge index than those indicating that parents, teachers or peers were primary sources of information and opinion. The degree of dependence on the mass media was correlated +.24 with knowledge, while level of dependence on each of the interpersonal agents was negatively associated with knowledge.

This set of correlational and introspective data provides solid evidence of a substantial functional role for the media in the political learning process. Chaffee et al. conclude that "the use of mass media for public affairs information is an important factor in political socialization. The media are not simply a supplement to interpersonal communication, but constitute a major independent agency of personal political growth."

Another correlational study indicates mass media impact on political knowledge among younger children. Conway, Stevens and Smith (1973) tested almost 300 students in upper elementary school grades in Maryland. Their findings showed that exposure to television news programming and newspaper current events coverage was moderately associated with perceptions of policy differences between political parties, awareness of the law-making process in government, and knowledge of governmental roles.

There are several research investigations featuring self-report perceptions of the role of the mass media versus other socialization agencies. In the most thorough study, Dominick (1972) administered questionnaires to more than 300 junior high school students in New York City. The mass media were the primary sources of information about the president (83%), vice-president (85%), Congress (59%) and the Supreme Court (50%). In each case, television was cited most often, followed by newspapers; moving from the most visible executive branch to the least visible court, references to television declined and reliance on the teacher increased.

Dominick also asked students to name the "best place to look for help in deciding whom to vote for." They most often referred to newspapers (36%), along with parents (26%) and television (21%). For the "best place to go for information about candidates and issues," the primary source was again newspapers (50%), which rated far ahead of television (20%) and parents (12%). Thus, the mass media were cited by a majority of children on all items in the survey.

Dominick argued that the traditional agencies of political socialization -- parents and schools -- are less effective in transmitting political information to lower class youngsters. At the same time, these children

spend large amounts of time viewing television. As expected, he found that children from low-income homes, particularly boys, were more reliant on television and less dependent on parents for political information than middle-income children.

Self-report measures have also been used to determine sources of information about foreign affairs. A study by Hollander (1971) examined five basic agents of socialization to international conflict in general and to the Vietnam War in particular. High school seniors were asked specific questions about the nature, causes and consequences of war. When told to identify the sources of information they used as a basis for answering these questions, they cited the mass media in three-fifths of the cases. Second most important was the school, followed distantly by family, friends and church. Among mass media sources, television was clearly most crucial with newspapers next most often cited.

In a similar pair of studies, Coldevin (1972, 1973) asked high school juniors to define and describe their international political cognitions along several specified dimensions. Respondent identifications of most important sources for this information again showed that more than half relied primarily on the mass media, especially television. Next most important was the school, while family and friends were seldom mentioned.

All of these studies have dealt with cognitive effects of mass media exposure. Little research has explored variables other than political knowledge. Byrne (1969) examined affective feelings toward government in a survey of almost 400 junior and senior high school students in North Carolina. He discovered that adolescents exposed primarily to television news rather than newspaper news tended to think favorably about government in general, and perceive government as performing effectively.

Atkin, Crouch and Trolldahl (1973) dealt with a range of political effects in a study of the role of the mass media among college student voters. Although this age group is often considered beyond normal socialization processes, most of the recently enfranchised students were in a new political environment where they possessed little knowledge or attitudes about local politicians and issues. Thus, it was expected that the mass media, particularly the campus newspaper, would play a large role in socializing the student voters in a salient city council election campaign.

The results showed that four-fifths of the undergraduate sample at Michigan State University were exposed to newspaper coverage of the voter registration campaign, while one-fourth experienced interpersonal communication on the matter. Of those exposed to the newspaper, 36% said that it directly influenced their decision to register for the local election.

During the election campaign, Atkin et al. found that 86% read news coverage and 26% heard radio news about the election. Interpersonally, 75% talked with friends about the campaign and 25% reported that someone had tried to influence them. Amount of exposure to the newspaper correlated  $+ .40$  with political knowledge, substantially higher than the  $+ .15$  correlation between knowledge and amount of interpersonal discussion. When asked if any of the newspaper content helped in their political decision-making, 50% cited a special election feature story, 18% referred to an editorial endorsement, and 13% noted advertising. Among those who were uncertain and late in deciding, half read the editorial recommending which candidates to select. More than half the readers reported that the endorsement was a "very" or "fairly" important factor affecting their decision. In addition, editorial readers tended to vote for the endorsed candidates somewhat more than non-readers.



These research investigations have examined the impact of political content exposure only in naturalistic settings. Can this informal learning process be adapted to the classroom situation and achieve a broader impact? Although no studies have focused on the political socialization effects of mass media materials used in formalized school curricula, there is a voluminous research literature assessing the multi-faceted role of instructional television in the schools. A review of the evidence by Chu and Schramm (1967) indicates that television is an efficient and effective tool for general learning in high school. Most studies have compared conventional teaching methods with televised instruction across a wide variety of subjects. Most relevant are 151 comparisons for social studies teaching, where 91% of the television groups did as well or better than the conventional control groups. This rate is higher than for any other academic subject investigated. In addition, research has shown that televised coursework in social studies is favorably received by the students.

#### Effects of Formal Civics Training in the Secondary School

Most American high schools attempt to inculcate political beliefs, knowledge and involvement through the formal civics or social studies curriculum. Research on citizenship and political participation values has generally shown that such courses have little impact (Litt, 1963; Patterson, 1960; Remmers and Radlér, 1962). On the other hand, Almond and Verba (1963) did find an association between level of subjective political competence among adults and their earlier school work in politics and government, in the United States, Great Britain and Mexico.



Langton and Jennings (1968) found that civics coursework had little impact on their nationwide sample of more than 1600 high school seniors. Controlling for the influence of seven potentially intervening variables, they found weak partial correlations between quantity of civics education and a range of dependent variables. The most striking set of findings showed that black students were more affected by these courses than whites in terms of political knowledge (+.30 vs. +.08), political interest (+.15 vs. +.06), political efficacy (+.18 vs. +.05) and civic tolerance (+.22 vs. +.06). This was particularly the case for blacks from lower class backgrounds. The authors inferred that the content of civics classes was largely redundant for whites, but provided new inputs for the less politically sophisticated black subsample.

The impact of this coursework on communication behavior was also minor, although the pattern of racial effects shifted. Interpersonal political discussions and mass media public affairs exposure were related positively with civics training for whites (discussion +.04; newspaper +.07; magazine +.10; television +.07). In contrast, blacks were distinctly less likely to communicate if they had experienced civics coursework (discussion -.07; newspaper -.17; magazine -.10; television -.21). Langton and Jennings offer the explanation that civics course work serves as a substitute for political information-seeking among blacks from lower status backgrounds while tending to depoliticize higher status black students.

#### Consequences of Adolescent Political Socialization

As this overall review of the literature indicates, most investigations have concentrated on the relative contributions of the various socialization agencies. Far less attention has been devoted to the absolute degree of

political learning during childhood and adolescence, and the implications of this socialization for adult political orientations. Does the conventional socialization process provide an adequate amount of knowledge and understanding of the political system? Does it stimulate optimum levels of political interest, efficacy, and participation during adulthood?

The evidence from public surveys and voting statistics indicates an unsatisfactory outcome from the pre-adult socialization process. Most political scholars and commentators agree that too few Americans are sufficiently knowledgeable and involved in political affairs. Most disturbing is the recurrent finding that the recently socialized young adults tend to rank lowest on indices of political awareness and behavior. To support these generalizations, the next section will examine some of the extensive research data on two key variables, political knowledge and voting turnout.

Political Knowledge: Since the earliest days of scientific public opinion research, such major pollsters as George Gallup and Elmo Roper have measured the level of public information about political figures, issues and institutions. Reviewing these data, Hyman and Sheatsley (1947) identified at least 20% of the population as "hard-core know-nothings" who were completely ignorant of political affairs. A larger proportion were only marginally informed about politics. For instance, surveys during the 1940's showed that just 35% of the public could name both of their U.S. senators and 38% could identify their congressman. Similar questions asked during the 1960's give no hint of improved public knowledgeability, as 34% named both senators and 40% knew their representative (Smith, 1972). Writing more than two decades after Hyman and Sheatsley, Sears (1969) concluded that "certainly one should not assume in the voter too complex a perception of the current flow of political persons and events."

Familiarity with important national leaders is often limited. Cantril and Free (1968) reported that 79% of the public could identify Hubert Humphrey as the vice-presidential candidate during the 1964 campaign. That same year, 31% knew something about Senator William Fulbright and 63% identified Chief Justice Earl Warren. In the mid-fifties, only 32% knew of Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson.

Nor is the public well acquainted with some of the basic structural features of the U.S. political system. While 80% could define the meaning of a presidential veto, just 19% could name the three branches of government (Lane and Sears, 1964). During the year that President Johnson served without a vice-president, less than half the public knew either the man or the office standing next in the line of succession (Cantril and Free, 1968).

Americans are even less well informed about foreign political figures and developments. Regarding Asian affairs, Smith (1972) reviewed evidence showing that "dark areas of ignorance" persisted well into the Vietnam era. For example, a 1964 survey found that half of a national sample were not aware of the existence of two separate Chinas with opposing political loyalties (Robinson, 1967). Cantril and Free discovered that just 40% of the public were aware of U Thant, although fully 71% knew of DeGaulle.

Glenn (1972) has organized extensive data to support the nonobvious proposition that young adults (21 to 29 years old) are less knowledgeable than the middle-aged and elderly. In a 1966 poll, 37% of the young adults knew the name of their Congressman, compared to 48% of those aged 30 and over. More relevant to the present study are age differences in knowledge about state politicians. Among young adults, the identification rate for state senator was 17% and for state representative was 14%. Older citizens

showed somewhat greater familiarity, as 31% named their senator and 27% knew their representative.

On the other hand, Glenn noted that the younger adults were slightly more cognizant than the older groups about the 1967 differences in Vietnam positions of Kennedy and Johnson. He argues that this information was particularly relevant to the personal concerns of draft-age males and their partners, and this factor accounted for the exception to the generally positive association between age and knowledge.

Voting Turnout: A wide variety of election studies have shown that young adults have the lowest rates of voting participation of any age group (Milbrath, 1965). This basic finding was obtained in the Erie County and Elmira voting studies of the 1940's (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1948; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954), and in the nationwide studies conducted by the Survey Research Center in the 1950's (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, 1960).

After analyzing turnout data from 23 Gallup Polls over a 20-year period, Glenn and Grimes (1968) concluded that "the lowest reported turnout is at the youngest adult ages." For instance, they traced the turnout pattern of an age cohort of voters born between 1915 and 1923. As 21-29 year olds in the 1944 presidential election, this cohort voted at a 50% rate. As the cohort aged in successive presidential campaigns, turnout increased to 71% in 1948, 77% in 1952, and over 80% in later elections. Another typical finding in this report showed that 60% of the eligible 21-29 year old voters turned out in the 1960 presidential contest, compared to 82% of the older voters.

Research data further indicate that many young people are not even motivated to register, let alone vote in an election. According to a 1970 Gallup Poll, the rate of voter registration increased monotonically from 34% in the 21-24 age bracket, to 58% in the 25-29 age group, to 79% of the 30-49 year olds, to 82% for those 50 and over (Erskine, 1971). In a special poll of 18-23 year old youth conducted after the passage of the constitutional amendment lowering the voting age, Gallup (1971) found that only 27% in this age group were registered to vote.

These survey data show that most adults display little understanding of their government and minimal participation in the electoral process. These shortcomings of democratic citizenship are particularly accentuated for young adults recently emerging from the basic political socialization experience.

#### Integrating Televised Political Content into Coursework

The weight of evidence from the research literature indicates that the secondary school curriculum has only a slight impact on political orientations. In contrast, informal mass media use during adolescence produces major effects on political knowledge and also influences political attitudes and participation. While acknowledging the importance of this informal source of socialization, the full potential of the media remains unrealized. The lack of political knowledge and involvement among young adults suggests that there is considerable room for improvement in facilitating the socialization process. Research shows that the development of political learning is particularly restricted where local and state politics are concerned.

One promising approach toward achieving more socialization is to combine some of the advantageous features of the mass media and the classroom. In this project, television coverage of state political affairs is brought into the classroom for high school students. Thus the school context can be used to guarantee higher levels of media exposure than would occur in the home environment; and the televised presentation provides a novel, interesting and informative supplement to conventional teaching practices. The normal textbook-lecture material can be enlivened by an extended video glimpse of practical politics in action.

The specific subject matter of the television programs in this project involved the daily activities of the state legislature, floor debates and committee meetings. Usually, the public has only limited access to the legislative process through periodic news reports and very rare visits to the Capitol. In Florida, however, the state's Sunshine Act provides for a more open and accessible process of legislation.

Florida Public Television covered the annual legislative session during spring, 1973, with a series of evening programs broadcast several times each week. Six 50-minute excerpts from these "Today in the Legislature" broadcasts were video-taped off the air for presentation to Tallahassee high school students in their social studies classes. The details of program content are described in the next section.

It was expected that classroom exposure to the television coverage would have greater impact on the students than normal class experiences or voluntary home viewing (which would be quite limited). Based on the research literature showing major mass media contributions to political cognitions, it was predicted that students would acquire substantial knowledge

about the legislature from these programs. It was also anticipated that repeated classroom viewing would stimulate an interest in the legislature and establish a taste for this television series and related types of public affairs content. It was expected this would carry over to subsequent home exposure. Secondary effects were predicted for such affective variables as political efficacy and attitude toward state political figures.

To determine the impact of these presentations, a pretest-posttest experimental design was implemented. Classrooms in the high school were randomly assigned into either viewing or non-viewing conditions. Both groups completed questionnaires before the viewing sessions began and again immediately after viewing the six-program series. Two weeks later, a delayed after-test was administered to measure persistence of impact over time. This provided a short-run assessment of the expectation that the classroom viewing experience would lead students to develop an appetite for political news content extending beyond any transitory arousal of the experimental period.

Four basic hypotheses are tested. Compared to the control group, it is predicted that exposure to the "Today in the Legislature" television series will:

- a. Increase the level of political interest, interpersonal communication about politics; and mass media exposure to political content.
- b. Increase the level of knowledge about state government, in terms of gaining understanding about the structural aspects of legislative functioning, and acquiring factual information about the current actions of the legislature.
- c. Produce more favorable evaluations of the state legislators along several attitudinal dimensions.
- d. Increase the sense of political efficacy.



In addition to these primary main effects, the study examined differential responses to the programs according to key demographic and political characteristics of the subjects. These include sex, age, scholastic ability, race, social class, and initial levels of political knowledge, interest, communication, efficacy, and attitudes. The role of certain intervening variables within the exposed group is also analyzed to determine the nature of the flow of influence from the series.

The following section describes the specific measures and procedures of the experiment.

#### METHODS

The series of public television programs on the state legislature was broadcast on week-day nights from April 3, 1973, through the closing sessions of the legislature in early June. Public stations in eight Florida areas carried the series. The site for the present study was Tallahassee. This site was chosen from among the eight for several efficiency reasons. The taping facilities of Florida State University were made available for creating and editing videotapes of programs used in the study; University personnel were available for monitoring various phases of the data-gathering; Tallahassee is the state capitol, where the programs originated, and the experimental design of the study was not dependent on any particular community characteristics.

Tallahassee schools are part of the Leon County school system. Tallahassee itself has 75% of the county population of 115,000 (as of 1971). The adults of the county are distributed by occupation in the following categories: wholesale and retail trade, 16%; services, 10%; and government,



45%. (No other occupation grouping exceeds 5%.) The government category encompasses those who work directly in state government jobs and those employed at Florida State University. Forty-six percent of the adults have one or more years of college training; 15% of them exceed a bachelor's degree.

The student population in the Leon County public schools includes about one-fourth from rural areas. The racial distribution includes 29% black and 71% white children. The student body was integrated totally in 1967, and 30% of all students are now bused at public expense. In 1970, the faculty was integrated to meet the ratio specified by court orders.

The school system operates three high schools in Tallahassee. Amos P. Godby High School was chosen in collaboration with the research team and the school administration as the most representative of the area population. Permission for the conduct of the study was received from the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Ned Lovell, and the Leon County Schools Advisory Committee on Research.

### Subjects

At the high school, testing was conducted within virtually all classes teaching a required course in civics, for 9th graders, and classes teaching American History or its optional substitute, Comparative Systems, for 11th graders. Only a handful of 10th graders were in the 9th grade course, but the advanced course enrollment included 25% seniors.

In the study, five 9th grade classes in civics served as experimental groups and five served as control groups; among the older students, six classes were experimental and nine were controls. The disparity in number of classes for the older students was offset by the actual enrollment, i.e.,

it was done to equalize the numbers of students in control and experimental conditions.

At the first testing session, before any experimental treatments were introduced, the distribution of students showed that 28% were black and 72% were white -- exactly representative of the entire school system -- and there were equal proportions of males and females.

In all, the study began with 544 participating students. Among the 258 ninth graders, 131 were in the experimental treatments and 127 in the controls; among the 286 eleventh-twelfth graders, 147 were assigned to experimental conditions, and 137 to controls. The original allocation of subjects to experimental and control treatments provided approximate equalization on all anticipated demographic characteristics, with one exception. It was determined that proportionately more black students were in control groups (30%) than in experimental groups (23%). This difference was examined in analysis of the data.

#### Testing Waves

Three testing sessions were conducted with the experimental and control groups. The first, in late March, provided baseline data against which subsequent data were compared. The second testing was conducted in mid-May, immediately after the full set of experimental sessions had been introduced. The third testing was executed in the first week of June, a two-week delay from the second testing, to tap the longevity of some effects of the earlier experimental conditions. The first and second testings were 50-minute sessions, and the third required 10 minutes.

As would be expected, there was some attrition from test period to test period, for both the experimental and control subjects. At the first test

session 544 students participated; at the second, 555 students were examined, of whom 429 had completed questionnaires in the first session; at the third session 445 students were involved. Illnesses, trips -- and an unknown Senior Skip Day at the third testing -- all contributed to subject attrition. This third testing included 342 youngsters for whom three sets of data existed. The analyses and the presentation of results will specify the nature in which attrition was handled. Basically, however, many analyses are concerned with change from one time to another, and the subjects who participated in both or all three sessions were the basis for the final set of findings.

#### The Experimental Sessions

Students serving in the experimental treatments were exposed in their normal classrooms to six videotape recordings of programs broadcast on the "Today In The Legislature" series. The research team chose programming dates with no foreknowledge of what the program content would be. The six programs were seen over a five-week period. The younger students were shown a program on one day; the older students on a second day. Order of presentation was varied randomly across the six viewing sessions.

On specific evenings, the original broadcast was videotaped by the ~~closed-circuit television facilities at Florida State University.~~ For the next two days, that recording was used in the classrooms designated as experimental ones. The original broadcasts typically ran 60 minutes each. Editing reduced the tapes to 50 minutes each, to fit within the class periods. No discussion of the programs was done with the students by the experimenters or the teachers.

Public broadcast of the series began on April 3. The first experimental viewing sessions were April 11-12. There followed a two-week Easter Holiday in the schools. Subsequent viewing dates were April 25-26, May 2-3, 7-8, 9-10, and 14-15. Immediate posttesting was done on May 16-17, and the third testing session was June 4.

Post-hoc analysis of the major topics covered in these programs provides the following capsule summary of each of the programs seen by the experimental groups of students:

First program: Committee meetings in which consumer affairs were discussed; floor debates on an equal rights amendment and a change in property assessment; discussion of the alcohol consumption rights of 18-year-olds.

Second program: Committee discussion on a bill to ban throw-away bottles and cans in Florida, including the committee vote to kill the bill; the appearance on the Senate floor of the junior U.S. Senator from Florida, Lawton Chiles; a review of the progress of bills in committees of the House and Senate.

Third program: House action on an amendment and bill dealing with the consumption of alcohol by drivers, and the sale of alcoholic beverages in service stations; discussion of the legislation dealing with the conduct of election campaigns; a lengthy session debating the calendar of legislative activities.

Fourth program: Action on a claims bill which waived the state's immunity to being sued for a particular constituent; the appearance of an 86-year-old guest to address the House, a woman who was an unpaid lobbyist for the general public; a lengthy film story on the capitol press corps and how it does its job; action on a bill which repealed higher mandatory limits of auto insurance.

Fifth program: House debate on an 18-year-old majority rights bill, which focused on drinking and gambling issues, eventually voted on and passed; analysis of the work of the committee on rules and calendar, which established the schedule of business of the legislature.

Sixth program: A lengthy interview with Florida's Governor Askew; debate on a bail bond reform bill, with emphasis on how a bill can be altered through the amendment process, and then killed; hearings on the possibility of a state-wide grand jury to investigate organized crime in Florida.

#### Study Variables

This study sought to examine the effects of exposure to this series of programs among adolescents. The effects which concerned us were all related to aspects of political socialization -- what kinds of attitudes might be formed or altered, what information was obtained, what incentive for political participation may have occurred?

Specifically, the principal dependent variables were grouped as follows:

1. Political interest and communication, including continuing use of public television for political information
2. The individual's sense of political effectiveness
3. General evaluation of state legislators
4. Knowledge about politics

Here, we shall specify the operationalization of each of these study variables and, in a concluding section, identify additional information sought from the study participants.

## Political Interest and Communication

Questions were designed to tap four types of behavior, which we have grouped here.

Political interest was indexed with a single question, asked at all three time periods:

1. Each year, the Florida State Legislature meets in the spring. How interested are you in the things that happen in the Legislature?

(very, somewhat, a little or not interested)

Interpersonal communication about politics was assessed by a pair of questions, asked during the three waves:

1. How often do you talk about politics with your friends?

(often, sometimes, almost never)

2. How often do you talk about politics with your parents?

(often, sometimes, almost never)

Public affairs exposure was directed at the individual's attention to law-making news as manifested by certain mass media behaviors. Three questions served as replicates in this area:

1. How often do you read news about the state government in Tallahassee?

(every day, several times a week, once or twice a week, almost never)

2. How often do you read about the national government in Washington?

(every day, several times a week, once or twice a week, almost never)

3. About how often do you watch the national TV news shows, like Walter Cronkite or John Chancellor?

(every day, several times a week, once or twice a week, almost never)

All the items described in this section were treated singly, and no combined measures were constructed.

Use of public television for political information. At two time periods we assessed the out-of-class public television exposure behaviors of the study respondents.

During the second testing session, after the experimental group had viewed six of the series' episodes in classroom situations, all respondents were asked two questions about their home viewing behavior:

1. This year, the Florida State Legislature sessions are being presented on TV. About how many of these shows have you watched on TV at home?

(none, one or two, some of them, most of them)

2. About how many have your parents watched?

(none, one or two, some of them, most of them)

At the third testing session -- fully two weeks after their in-class exposure to the series had ended -- we again assessed their now voluntary exposure to these shows. Basically we sought to determine whether the forced exposure incidents had led to any longitudinal increment in their political interest, as assessed by self-selection of such programs. The questions asked were:

1. This year, WFSU (Channel 11) has been showing some programs on the state legislature, called "Today In The Legislature." In the last two weeks, how many of these shows have you seen at home?

(0 to more than 10)

2. Tonight will be the last show of "Today In The Legislature." Do you think you'll watch it?

(yes, no, maybe)

### Political Efficacy

As introduced by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954), political efficacy identifies a set of psychological dispositions toward politics involving

perceived effectiveness and capacity in the governmental sphere. Subsequent research has defined at least three elements of efficacy: a feeling that government authorities are responsive to individuals like the respondent; the perception that the general public can affect the course of government; and the subjective ability of the respondent to comprehend the intricacies of politics and government (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1960; Easton and Dennis, 1967).

Items tapping political efficacy were adapted from those used in prior research at the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan (Robinson, Rusk, and Head, 1968). A three-item index was constructed from the following:

Here are three statements about the government. Tell us whether you agree or disagree with each one:

1. Public officials do not care much about what people like yourself think.
2. The way people vote is the main thing that decides how things are run in this country.
3. Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like you can't really understand what's going on.

Response categories were 'agree,' 'not sure' and 'disagree.' Responses from the three items were summed into a single index with a range from 0-6, with the higher score representing a larger sense of political efficacy. The average inter-item correlation was +.05. The Time 1 index was correlated +.31 with the Time 2 re-administration of the three-item index. At Time 1, the distribution of respondents was:



<u>Score</u>	<u>%</u>
0	7
1	7
2	22
3	22
4	28
5	7
6	7

### Evaluation of Legislators

Much of the program time emphasized the work of legislators, either in committees, on the floor of the House or Senate, or in personal interview situations. Three attributes of the legislators were assessed both before and after exposure to the television series, in this fashion:

In general, what do you think of the state legislators? Are they ...

smart	not smart	not sure
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trustworthy	not trustworthy	not sure
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hard-working	not hard-working	not sure
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These three responses were summed into a single index with a range from 0-6, with the higher score representing more favorable reactions. The average inter-item correlation was +.31. The correlation between Time 1 and Time 2 indices was +.39. At Time 1, the distribution of responses was:

<u>Score</u>	<u>%</u>
0-2	15
3	24
4	25
5	16
6	20

Two single items also fit this section. For one, the youngsters were asked, "After you finish school, do you think that you might want to be a legislator?" as a means of determining whether a more favorable attitude toward

legislators would lead to this level of desirability. Response categories were 'yes,' 'no,' and 'maybe,' and the question was asked at the first two testing sessions. At a more general level, another question asked about the degree of secrecy in legislative work. The question was, "How much of the legislature's work is done in secret?" It was anticipated that a principal outcome of televising legislative sessions would be to substantially reduce any aura of secrecy.

#### Political Knowledge

The cognitive effects of exposure to the televised programs were assessed in three ways. A series of general knowledge questions about the activities of the state legislature was introduced at the first testing, and repeated identically at the second wave. It determined whether and what the students were learning about the general process of legislative activities.

For the second wave of testing, a second battery of knowledge questions were constructed which dealt with specific activities of the legislature, as could have been observed in the programs, or obtained through other media reportings of legislative business. This second battery was sub-divided into questions which dealt with (a) factual knowledge about bills and actions of the legislature during its current session; and (b) structural aspects of how the legislature works.

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Each of these knowledge variables will be operationalized here.

Basic legislative knowledge. These questions were repeated during the first two testings. Nine questions were asked, and each was scored as correct or not. For most, only one answer could be correct; for some, trained coders determined the acceptability of the response. All questions are cited here, with correct answers, or samplings of correct answers. After the

questions and answers, we have presented the percentage of students with the correct answer at the first testing.

1. Which political party has a majority in the legislature? (Democrats) 41%.
2. What is the name of the man who is the President of the State Senate? (Horne) 8%.
3. In general, what does the legislature do when it meets each year at the Capitol? (votes on bills, makes laws, brings up new laws, discusses laws, bills are proposed) 52%.
4. What is the name of the man who was elected from your district in the Florida House of Representatives? (Tucker or Webb) 12%.
5. Which house of the legislature has the most members? (House of Representatives) 58%.
6. What is the name of one important committee in the State Legislature? (any of 27 House/Senate committees) 8%.
7. What do the legislators do at committee meetings? (write up bills, read and discuss bills, decide whether bill should go to House/Senate) 25%.
8. When the legislature meets in Tallahassee each year, how long does their session usually last? (any figure from 6-10 weeks) 23%.
9. What do you think are the most important issues facing Florida this year? (Respondents citing any one issue were scored as correct [55%]; those citing more than one issue were scored twice as correct [35%]).

The range of possible scores was 0-10, by summing all correct responses.

The average inter-item correlation was +.19 and the Time 1-Time 2 correlation was +.67. At Time 1, the distribution of responses was:

<u>Score</u>	<u>%</u>
0	12
1	17
2	18
3	13
4	11
5	11
6	8
7-10	10

Knowledge about current legislative activities. At the second wave of testing, nine factual items were introduced to determine the level of awareness as to what was currently happening in the legislature, with specific bills, committees, etc. The full set of items appears below. For the first two, a correct answer was coded as 1, for the other seven, a correct answer was coded as 2, and the response, "I'm not sure," was coded as 1. All incorrect responses were coded 0. Responses were all provided in a multiple choice listing. The correct answers are indicated parenthetically, and the mean score per item is entered.

1. Who is trying to get more control over protecting consumers in the State of Florida? (the Governor's office) .10.
2. The legislature discussed an equal rights amendment. What does it deal with? (men and women have the same rights) .45.
3. The legislature did not give 18-year-olds the right to drink in this session. (false) 1.62.
4. A bill dealing with throwaway bottles and cans was introduced into the current session of the legislature. What happened to it? (it failed in committee hearings) .89.
5. In states which have banned pop-top cans, has it hurt sales of pop and beer? (no) 1.18.
6. What does a Sunshine law do? (opens up government meetings) .65.
7. Is Florida one of the first few states to give 18-year-olds full rights? (no) .98.
8. ~~When Florida voted 2 years ago on giving 18-year-olds full rights,~~ what happened? (most people were against it) 1.44.
9. What has been the most controversial part of the law to give 18-year-olds full rights? (that they can drink) 1.35.

By summing all scores to individual items, the range of possible scores was 0-16. The average inter-item correlation was +.09. For this composite index, the actual distribution across all respondents at Time 2 was:

<u>Score</u>	<u>%</u>
0-4	7
5-6	12
7	13
8	12
9	15
10	14
11	13
12	9
13-16	5

Knowledge about legislative structure. At the second wave of testing, 12 items were used to determine the respondent's level of understanding of how the Florida legislature works. The questions do not deal with specific pieces of legislation, but with the manner by which bills are dealt with, the importance or lack of it of certain legislative activities, and the role of the executive branch. Again, multiple choice categories were used, responses were scored as correct (2), partly correct (1), or incorrect (0). This was the scoring method for all items, save the last one in the list below. Maximally correct responses are indicated parenthetically, and the item means are entered.

1. How many bills does the legislature deal with in a session? (more than 100) .93.
2. Some legislators have a Populist philosophy. Does this mean they vote...(what they think the people want them to vote) 1.31.
3. When people make amendments to bills, are they generally in favor or generally against the bill? (it depends) 1.22.
4. What is the number of people who report on the legislature for newspapers, TV and radio? (30-50) .76.
5. How important are committee hearings? (very or somewhat important) 1.78.
6. How important is the committee on rules and calendars? (very or somewhat important) 1.49.

7. Which branch of government has the most to say about making laws in Florida? (the legislative branch) 1.31.
8. Can a bill in Florida become law if the Governor does not sign it? (yes) 1.29.
9. When a Senator makes a speech on the floor of the Senate, how much of the time do other Senators usually pay attention to him? (some of the time) 1.06.
10. When the legislators vote on a bill, how do they cast their votes? (push button on voting machine) 1.35.
11. When the legislators are working, do they act serious or humorous? (sometimes serious and sometimes humorous) 1.32.
12. Can you give me the name of one U.S. Senator from Florida? (Gurney or Chiles) .24.

By summing all scores to individual items, the range of possible scores was 0-23. The average inter-item correlation was +.17. The frequency distribution for this index, across all respondents at Time 2 was:

<u>Score</u>	<u>%</u>
0-8	11
9-10	9
11-12	14
13-14	16
15-16	15
17-18	19
19-20	12
21-23	4

The validity of these knowledge indices can be assessed with an analysis of the intercorrelations among the three measures at Time 2. The basic political knowledge index was correlated +.54 with the current activities index and +.35 with the structural knowledge index. The indices of structural and activities knowledge were correlated +.51.

#### Control Variables

To establish the comparability of the experimental and control groups used in this experiment, as well as to isolate other factors which might

contribute to observed differences, certain additional information was obtained during the first testing wave.

This information represented four variable areas:

1. General media behaviors. Respondents were asked how much general television watching and how much general newspaper reading they did. Their viewing of Channel 11 was also ascertained.
2. Interest in presidential politics. We determined the degree of the respondents interest in the prior year's presidential campaign, and whether they had done anything to help one of the candidates.
3. Awareness of the series "Today In The Legislature." Respondents were asked whether they knew anything about a new series of shows on the legislature, whether they planned to watch any of them, and how often they thought their parents would watch the series.
4. Demography. Characteristics identified were political party preference, father's occupation, sex, race, and a self-report of scholastic grades.

So the reader may know something about the comparability of the experimental and control groups on these characteristics, we shall indicate here what kinds of differences were obtained:

1. In terms of general media behaviors, there were no significant differences between experimental and control subjects on any of the variables.
2. There were no differences between the groups in terms of interest in presidential politics.
3. As to awareness of the series, both groups were equally aware at Time 1, and there was no significant difference in the anticipated viewing of their parents. However, in terms of the respondents' own anticipated

viewing, the experimental group expressed significantly more anticipated viewing of the series than did the control group.

4. The groups were not different in terms of sex, father's occupation, or grades in school. There were significantly more Democrats in the experimental treatments, and significantly more white respondents.

#### Analysis of Data

The specific modes of analysis are described in the results section. For some dependent behaviors, data were gathered at multiple points in time; for others, at single points in time, thereby requiring different data treatments. Where appropriate or necessary, control variables were introduced.

### RESULTS

The first portion of this section presents analyses which test the main study hypotheses in terms of general and overall effects. The second portion examines interactions and inter-relationships of other relevant variables with the key dependent variables. The results presentation follows this sequence in dealing with the principal study variables:

- 1) Political interest and communication behaviors;
- 2) Political efficacy;
- 3) Legislative attitudes; and
- 4) Knowledge about legislative activities and the political process.

#### Political Interest and Communication

This area encompassed four sub-groups of variables: Political interest in the state legislature, interpersonal communication about politics, exposure to other sources of public affairs information, and the voluntary use of public television for political affairs information. Table 1 summarizes the findings, with mean levels on each variable.



Political interest. The political interest measure was asked at all three time waves. There was a significant increase in political interest between T1 and T2 which was sustained at the third testing. At the first session, 20% of the experimental subjects and 22% of the control subjects were flatly not interested in what happens when the Florida State Legislature meets. At the conclusion of the public television showings, 11% of the experimental group remained not interested whereas 43% were either somewhat or very interested; 19% of the controls remained not interested and 30% were somewhat or very interested. Clearly, exposure to this television series had increased adolescent interest in state politics, and that interest level was maintained for some time after their forced exposure to the television programs had ended.

Interpersonal communication about politics. All the youngsters were asked how often they talked about politics with their friends or with their parents. As far as the parental measure was concerned, the control and experimental groups were not different at T1 or T2 testings, and were significantly different at T3. In all cases the direction of this difference was for the experimental groups to have indicated more frequent interaction with their parents about politics. One anomaly was that the increase of interaction level was not sustained at the time of the third testing; there was backsliding in terms of how much talking with parents occurred. However, the experimental group never returned to its baseline level of interaction. The control subjects actually had regressed below the initial level when they were asked for the final time about talking politics with their parents.

Table 1

## Effect of Program Viewing on Political Interest and Communication

Dependent Variable		Experimental (n=176)	Control (n=166)	p value
Interest in Legislature	T1	1.17	1.12	n.s.
	T2	1.30	1.13	<.05
	T3	1.36	1.19	<.05
Talking with Parents	T1	.60	.57	n.s.
	T2	.81	.70	n.s.
	T3	.67	.47	<.001
Talking with Friends	T1	.49	.38	n.s.
	T2	.68	.54	<.05
	T3	.61	.39	<.001
Reading Legislature News	T1	.96	.83	n.s.
	T2	.76	.76	n.s.
	T3	.85	.64	<.05
National News Watching	T1	1.11	1.29	n.s.
	T2	1.10	1.10	n.s.
	T3	1.28	1.43	n.s.

N=342 subjects completing questionnaires at all three sessions.

Analyses controlling for initial Experimental-Control Group differences in Talking with Friends, Reading Legislature News, and National News Watching are discussed at the end of this section.

Impact on talking about politics with friends occurred even more rapidly. While not significantly different at T1, the experimental viewers were more likely to talk about politics with friends at both the second and third testing sessions. As found with the parental discussion measure, there was backsliding among both test groups at the third testing. This regression for the control group was complete. That is, at T3, the average level of talking with friends matched the T1 level for the control subjects. However, among the experimental group adolescents, the T3 level of talking with parents remained substantially higher than it was originally.

Clearly, both of these interpersonal communication measures, the series had a significant impact.

Public affairs exposure. The items used to tap public affairs exposure dealt with the reading of news about the state government in Tallahassee and watching national TV news shows.

There was no effect from watching this series on the watching of network news programs.

The impact of the television series on public affairs exposure was at the state level. It was a delayed impact. The control and experimental groups did not differ in their exposure to state government news at either

the T1 or T2 testings. However, at the final testing session several weeks after the series had ended for the experimental subjects, those youngsters expressed significantly more frequent exposure to news about the state government in Tallahassee than the control group. This delayed impact finding is one which will be repeated with other of the dependent variables discussed below.

#### Public Television for Political Information

During the first and second testings, all respondents were asked about potential and actual watching of the series as broadcast in the evening on the public stations. At the third session, the respondents were asked how many of the programs in the series they had chosen to watch. For the experimental subjects, asking this question at T3 was their first opportunity to indicate voluntary exposure to programs in the series during a time period in which they were not also concurrently being forced to expose themselves in their classrooms.

Although it was these data from the third session which were of maximum interest, the earlier data provide useful and interesting context for those findings. At T1, respondents in the experimental group indicated that they planned to watch significantly more of these programs than the control subjects and furthermore they estimated that their parents would be watching more of these programs than the control subjects estimated. The importance of this difference was diminished in the T2 data. When asked how many of these shows they had indeed watched and how many they believed their parents had watched, there was no difference between the youngsters in the experimental and control groups.

At the third testing session, several weeks after experimental viewing had ended, the youngsters were again asked how many shows they had seen in the series during the last two weeks. The youngsters who had been watching the programs in their classrooms reported voluntarily watching three times as many shows as the youngsters who had not been exposed to the series ( $p < .001$ ). The mean number of home programs viewed by the experimental group was 1.10, while the control group watched .32 programs on the average. In addition, 31% of the experimental subjects vs. 24% of the control subjects said they intended to view the program that evening. This is a striking effect from the classroom exposure to the television series. It suggests perhaps that the development of preferences can indeed follow from deliberate and even involuntary exposure to programs of a particular genre.\*

From this, we may conclude that youngsters who watch a public affairs television series in a classroom situation are far more likely to voluntarily continue to follow that same series once the classroom exposure has ended.

#### Political Efficacy

A three-item index tapped the individual's sense of political effectiveness. However, in our analysis of the first testing sessions results,

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\* Between the end of the experimental viewing sessions and the final testing session, the Watergate hearings achieved prominence on public television. During the third testing session, we introduced a number of questions which dealt with the individual's interest in the Watergate hearings, watching of the hearings, and expressed intention to watch some of the committee hearings. It was generally believed that if exposure in the classroom to the public affairs television series had some spillover impact, it might increase interest and media exposure more among those who had been in the experimental treatment. None of the data support that proposition. There was no greater interest, or talking about, or watching of Watergate among the experimental subjects.

it was found that the experimental subjects expressed significantly more efficacy than the control subjects. This difference was retained at the second testing and neither group had altered their level of political effectiveness differentially (Table 2). Therefore, it was not possible in this study to determine if the public television series viewed had an impact on the political efficacy of the adolescents in the experimental group. Inasmuch as they were higher to begin with, they may already have been close to whatever ceiling was possible in terms of a non-voting group's sense of political effectiveness. The experimental group was slightly above the index midpoint in terms of perceived efficacy; the control group was marginally below. To determine whether greater efficacy could be a result of such exposure, additional research is needed. We also looked at the individual items of the efficacy index to determine if this initial difference was persistent across items. It was persistent for two of the three items - those dealing with whether public officials cared much about what people think and the one which dealt with the influence of voting on the way things are run. The control and experimental groups did not differ initially in terms of how complicated government seemed to be, but they also showed no differential gain on this item at the second testing. Nothing can be derived from this particular study about efficacy as a consequence of public television political affairs exposure.

#### Attitude Toward State Legislators

Each of the respondents was asked at the first and second testings to indicate how smart, how trustworthy and how hardworking he felt the legislators were. The baselines for the individual items indicate that at T1, the respondents felt the legislators were relatively smart, fairly hardworking,

Table 2

## Effect of Program Viewing on Attitudes Toward Legislators

Dependent Variable		Experimental (n=227)	Control (n=202)	p value
Attitude toward Legislators	T1	4.11	4.01	n.s.
	T2	4.33	4.05	<.001
(a) How <u>trustworthy</u> are they?	T1	1.20	1.20	n.s.
	T2	1.33	1.21	<.05
(b) How <u>smart</u> are they?	T1	1.56	1.52	n.s.
	T2	1.60	1.51	n.s.
(c) How <u>hardworking</u> are they?	T1	1.35	1.30	n.s.
	T2	1.40	1.33	n.s.
Perception of Non-Secrecy	T1	1.59	1.46	n.s.
	T2	2.02	1.57	<.001
Desire to be Legislator	T1	.25	.21	n.s.
	T2	.28	.22	n.s.
Political Efficacy	T1	3.33	2.79	<.001
	T2	3.40	2.99	<.01

N=429 subjects completing questionnaires at first two sessions.

Analyses controlling for initial Experimental-Control Group differences in Political Efficacy are discussed at end of this section.



but they were not sure whether the legislators were trustworthy. There was a persistent trend on each of the three items for an increment on the attributes in the experimental group.

The main increment was on the trustworthy item. It differentiated the experimental from the control subjects. Watching the television series caused the experimental viewers to believe that the legislators were significantly more trustworthy than that same group felt they were at T1 and significantly more trustworthy than the control group perceived the legislators to be at T2.

More reliable than the individual items was the composite index formed by summing responses to all three attribute items. This overall index indicated that the control and experimental groups did not differ in their original attitude, that the control group did not change over time, but the overall attitude of the experimental viewers was significantly more favorable after watching the public television series.\*

Two other items used at the first two testings also fit into the overall notion of attitude toward legislators or the legislature. In one, we asked the participants how much of the business of the legislature they felt was conducted in secrecy. There was a dramatic shift in the experimental group which was nowhere matched among the control subjects, i.e., 51% thought

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\* The legislature programs also featured a subdued, thoughtful interview with the amiable governor of Florida, Reuben Askew. The experimental and control groups were compared at T2 on their evaluations of the governor along three dimensions. The experimental subjects rated him significantly nicer (on the nice-mean dimension), quieter (on the quiet-loud dimension), and more serious (on the serious-humorous dimension). The summed mean across these three items was 4.32 for the experimental subjects and 3.66 for the control subjects ( $p < .001$ ). These evaluations were not measured at T1.

"most or some" work was done in secret before, but only 25% expressed this attitude after. A principal impact of the TV series was to induce an attitude that the legislature does its business where the public can see it done.

A further test of attitudes toward the legislators was asking the youngsters if they themselves might want to be a legislator after they finish school. There were no significant changes within or between the experimental or control groups on this item. Three-fourths of all the respondents simply said no - they did not think that they might want to be a legislator.

Overall, watching the television series on public television in the classroom created more positive attitudes about the legislators and also toward the manner in which they conducted their business.

#### Political Knowledge

Knowledge was tapped at two points in time and covered three kinds of cognitive information: (1) basic knowledge about the Florida Legislature, not dependent on watching the series, was tapped at T1 and T2; (2) knowledge about current legislative actions, and (3) knowledge about how the legislature goes about doing its business were tapped separately at the second testing session, after the experimental groups had been exposed to the public affairs television series. The findings are in Tables 3 and 4.

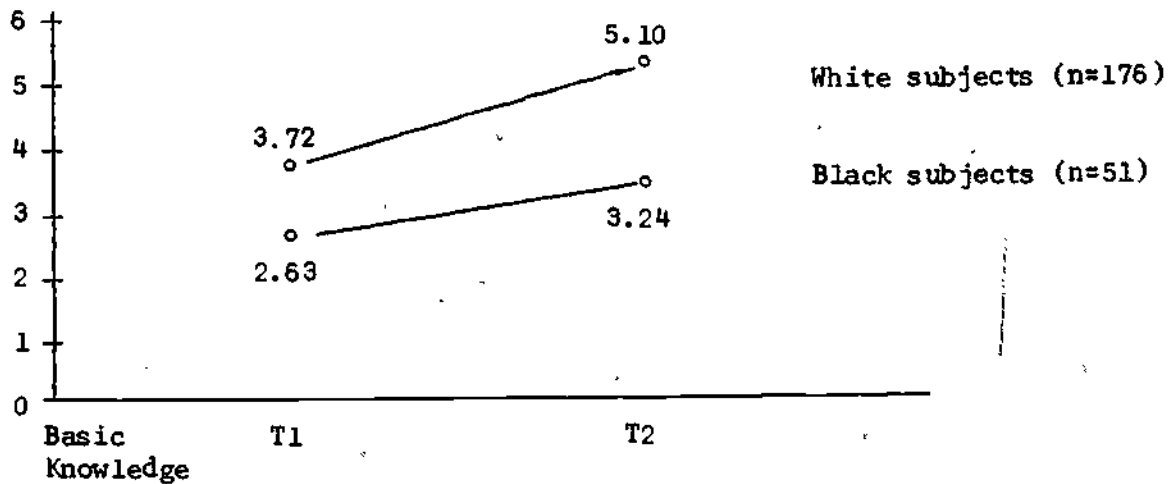
Let us begin with the overall knowledge index which tapped more general information. The range of possible scores was 0 to 10. It is worthwhile to point out that the baseline level of knowledge at the first testing session was a fraction larger than three correct items out of ten. For the experimental subjects, the net effect of watching the television series was a significant increment in their overall knowledge; for the control group there was little increase during this time period (Table 3). The differential change

Table 3

## Effect of Program Viewing on Basic Political Knowledge

Dependent Variable		Experimental (n=227)	Control (n=202)	p value
Basic Political Knowledge	T1	3.47	3.02	<.05
	T2	4.68	3.41	<.001

## Black-White Differences in Knowledge Gain (Experimental Group):



between the experimental and control groups in terms of the overall knowledge index was highly significant statistically.

It is necessary to point out that at T1 the experimental subjects did have slightly higher average scores than the control subjects. However, since our measure of the impact of the series was based on differential or relative change in knowledge over time between these groups, the initial difference is not an important problem. One of the interests in terms of this knowledge measure was an analysis of what has been termed the "knowledge gap" hypothesis with regard to public affairs information (Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien, 1971). The basic thesis is that the more knowledgeable, who tend to be the more advantaged in our society, profit even more from public affairs information in the media than do those who start out with less knowledge and who tend to be more disadvantaged. With the index under discussion, a comparison was made between black and white respondents within the control and experimental groups. The findings are consistent with the knowledge gap notions. The black youngsters scored less on the knowledge index at T1 whether they were in either the experimental or the control groups. From T1 to T2, the overall increase in knowledge demonstrated for the experimental subjects was located more so among the white respondents, although the black youngsters in the experimental group showed a significant knowledge gain. So for those youngsters who were viewing the television series in their classes, the more knowledgeable white youngsters increased their knowledge at an even more rapid pace. These interactions are further elaborated in Table 5b.

Let us turn now to the two cognitive indices used at the second testing to compare the control and experimental groups. First, let us deal with

current knowledge about the legislature, measured at T2 only. The maximum score was 16 and the average score for all respondents was 8.7, or an average score of 55% correct in terms of current legislative activities.

Watching the television series led to average knowledge scores of 9.84; the non-viewers in the experiment scored 7.6, (Table 4). In addition to the statistical significance of this difference, it is important to note that the viewers were scoring some 30% better on this particular measure.

Again, to look at the possibility that exposure improved more so the knowledge levels of those already more knowledgeable, we compared the results on this index between black and white youngsters. Within the control group, there was no particular difference in level of knowledge between blacks and whites. However, the white youngsters in the experimental group correctly answered two more questions on the average than the black youngsters who had seen the series. In terms of the kind of differential learning rate being discussed, the white viewers answered correctly  $2 \frac{1}{2}$  more questions per person than the white non-viewers, whereas the black viewers answered correctly one more question than the black non-viewers.

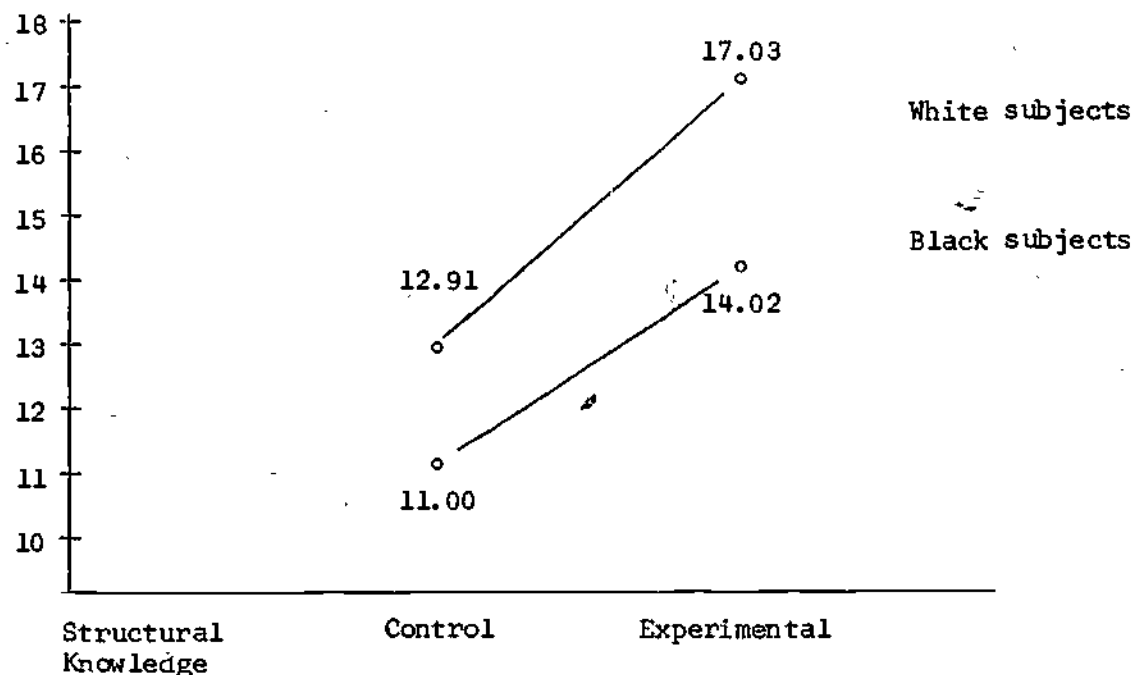
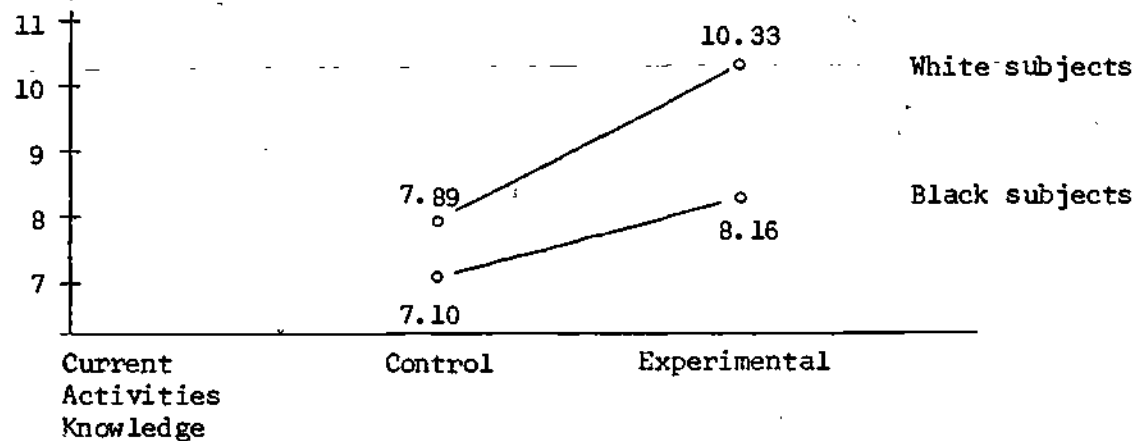
The final measure of knowledge dealt with the individual's understanding of how the legislature tends to work. For example, what do amendments do, the importance of committee hearings, the attention given by legislators to floor activity. The maximum score on this index could be 23. The average score for the viewers was 16.36. This compared to an average score of 12.31 for the non-viewers or control groups. Obviously, watching the series increased information about the nature of the legislative process. Again, the overall level of effect was to increase by  $\frac{1}{3}$  the available knowledge among all the viewers.

Table 4

## Effect of Program Viewing on Current Activities and Structural Knowledge

Dependent Variable		Experimental (n=227)	Control (n=202)	p value
Current Activities Knowledge	T2	9.84	7.64	<.001
Structural Knowledge	T2	16.36	12.31	<.001

## Black-White Differences in Knowledge:



We looked again for any evidence that such knowledge increments might be a differential function of the original knowledge level of the viewer, and that this in turn could be related to one's social background. The white respondents in both the experimental and control groups scored significantly higher than their black peers. The difference in knowledge between the white viewers and non-viewers was four units; the difference between black viewers and non-viewers was three units. Although this is a smaller gap, it represents fully 25% more learning among the presumably more advantaged learning group.

For all these knowledge gap comparisons, one caution must be explicitly expressed. Social class differences are confounded with racial difference. Lower class whites did not learn about politics at a different rate than lower class blacks, although the former were more knowledgeable to begin with. The source of the "gap" was found primarily in the amount of the learning done by middle-class whites, for whom no sizable black counterpart existed for comparison purposes.

For each type of cognitive information assessed, watching a political series on public television created a substantial growth in political knowledge. This was so whether one was asking if the youngsters had learned about the political process in general, about current legislative activities in particular, or about who the main persons in legislative activities are.

#### Note on Initial Experimental-Control Group Differences:

On several dependent variables, the experimental and control groups were not equivalent at the outset of the study. Considering experimental condition as an ordinal variable (non-viewers = 0, viewers = 1), there was a slight correlation between treatment and initial scores on five variables listed



below. A partialling technique was used to eliminate this initial relationship from the post-viewing analyses. Partial correlations were computed between experimental treatment and the T2 scores on each variable, controlling for the T1 correlation. The initial associations were also partialled out of the T3 relationships.

<u>Dependent variable</u>	<u>T1 correlation with treatment</u>	<u>T2 zero order r</u>	<u>T2/T1 partial</u>	<u>T3 zero order r</u>	<u>T3/T1 partial</u>
Political Efficacy	+ .19	+ .12	+ .06	(no T3 measure)	
Basic Political Knowledge	+ .10	+ .27	+ .27	(no T3 measure)	
National News Watching	- .08	- .00	+ .06	- .07	- .03
Talking with Friends	+ .08	+ .12	+ .09	+ .20	+ .18
Reading Legislature News	+ .07	- .00	- .03	+ .13	+ .11

Political Efficacy. The substantially higher experimental group scores at T2 become marginal when T1 scores are taken into account; the post-viewing association with treatment drops from +.12 to +.06. These adjusted figures indicate that the programs had little impact on the efficacy variable.

Basic Political Knowledge. The slight T1 relationship does not reduce the T2 correlation of +.27. Thus, the large post-viewing difference in basic knowledge appears to be due mainly to the experimental treatment.

National News Watching. Controlling for the original association, the null T2 correlation rises to +.06. However, the adjusted T3 correlation is still negligibly negative. It is clear that the program had no influence over television news viewing, even when the greater initial viewing in the control group is considered.

Talking with Friends. The originally positive relationship slightly attenuates the raw T2 and T3 associations, but each remains significant.

Reading Legislature News. Again, the T2 and T3 correlations with experimental treatment are slightly reduced. The delayed measure still shows a significant experimental-control group difference.

#### Interactions Between Treatment and Subject Characteristics

This section examines the interactions between the experimental treatment and certain antecedent variables, including demographics, academic ability, mass media exposure, interpersonal communication, and political orientations. These data are described with correlation coefficients computed between treatment condition (non-viewers = 0, viewers = 1) and the dependent variables, at each of two levels of an antecedent characteristic. The two levels were created from either nominal classifications, e.g., male vs. female, or by dividing the antecedent variable at the median, e.g., knowledgeable vs. less knowledgeable. This procedure provides a simple descriptive statistic which assesses the relative magnitude of the conditional effect of classroom viewing on various dependent measures at both the second and third testing sessions. The first column in Table 5a gives the correlation coefficients across the overall sample. This statistic parallels the ANOVA main effects findings presented in the previous section. Then, in adjacent columns, contingent correlations are presented for these demographic conditions:

Age: younger = 9-10th grade; older = 11-12th grade

Sex: male; female

Grade Average: low = 2.5 or less; high = 3.0-4.0

Race: White; Black

Social Class: working = laborer, operative, service, craftsman, formen;  
middle = sales, clerical, professional, technical,  
official, managerial

For other antecedent variables, only selected correlations were computed. These findings are described later in the text. The key findings for the five demographic characteristics from Table 5 are discussed first:

Age. The younger students clearly became more interested in the legislature and talked more with their parents as a result of experimental viewing, while the older students were not influenced along these dimensions. It was primarily the eleventh and twelfth graders who increased their political efficacy and gained a more favorable attitude toward the legislators. There was a moderate tendency for the ninth and tenth graders to learn somewhat more about the legislature during the experiment than their older counterparts did.

Sex. There were few major differences in response by the male and female subjects. Females were more stimulated to discuss politics with their parents, which may be a normally unexpected home topic for girls. Males were more likely to voluntarily watch home coverage of the legislature after the school viewing sessions ended. In general, the effects of the experimental treatment did not differ between the sexes, despite the sex differences in role expectations for political involvement and the virtually all-male composition of the legislative body.

Grade Average. It was anticipated that the more scholastically proficient students would learn most from the viewing experience because of their more developed intellectual and information processing skills. Their relative knowledge gain was greater than the gain among students of lower ability, but the difference was slight. The brighter students did respond with more interpersonal discussion, with both parents and friends. There was a slight tendency for the below average students to more positively change attitudes toward the legislature.

Table 5a

Conditional Associations between Experimental Treatment and Dependent Variables,  
at Two Levels of Antecedent Subject Characteristics

Dependent Variable	Overall Correlation With Treatment N=342	Conditional Correlations					
		Younger N=201	Older N=141	Male N=156	Female N=186	High Grades N=162	Low Grades N=180
Interest in Legislature T2	+.11	+.19	-.01	+.13	+.09	+.03	+.17
Interest in Legislature T3	+.12	+.16	+.04	+.14	+.08	+.12	+.09
Talking with Parents T2	+.10	+.21	.07	+.02	+.17	+.17	+.04
Talking with Parents T3	+.17	+.25	+.06	+.07	+.26	+.26	+.10
Talking with Friends T2	+.12	+.11	+.12	+.06	+.17	+.16	+.08
Talking with Friends T3	+.20	+.20	+.19	+.27	+.13	+.24	+.15
Reading Legislature News T2	.00	-.01	-.01	-.04	+.01	+.04	-.06
Reading Legislature News T3	+.13	+.18	+.05	+.17	+.09	+.10	+.14
National News Watching T2	.00	-.02	+.01	+.03	-.04	-.10	+.06
National News Watching T3	-.07	-.15	+.03	-.13	-.03	-.20	+.03
Watching Home Legislature T3	+.21	+.19	+.25	+.30	+.16	+.19	+.24
Attitude toward Legislators T2	+.09	+.03	+.17	+.11	+.06	+.04	+.13
Political Efficacy T2	+.12	+.04	+.23	+.18	+.07	+.11	+.12
Perception of Non-Secrecy T2	+.31	+.34	+.25	+.24	+.35	+.28	+.31
Basic Political Knowledge T2	+.27	+.31	+.25	+.25	+.31	+.35	+.23
Current Activities Knowledge T2	+.43	+.46	+.36	+.42	+.42	+.46	+.39
Structural Knowledge T2	+.48	+.55	+.37	+.47	+.48	+.52	+.46

N=342 subjects completing questionnaires at all three sessions.

Race. The programs had a similar impact on black and white subjects, as shown in Table 5b. The major difference was found for knowledge acquisition, where whites consistently learned more than blacks. However, at T3, the black youngsters were showing relatively more interest in the legislature and talking politics more often with friends. They remained more skeptical about the openness of legislative business.

Social Class. A remarkably uniform pattern of impact was found across the two levels of socio-economic status. The legislature programs appeared to contribute to the political socialization of less advantaged youngsters as much as for the middle-class youth.

Race and Class. Racial and social class differences are often confounded with each other. In this study, only 21% of the black youngsters were middle-class, compared to 65% of the whites. Table 5b breaks the study group among middle-class whites, and working-class blacks and whites. The small total number of middle-class blacks (n=21) available at all three testings precludes analyzing them separately.

The findings further articulate the increased political interest generated among the black youngsters, and the increased interpersonal discussion level. These same youngsters also increased their reading of legislative news. Both the working-class groups remained more skeptical of the openness of the legislative process.

The overall lack of social class differences existed primarily among the white youngsters.

One anomaly in this breakdown is the interaction of race/class with political knowledge and viewing. The original racial difference in the knowledge correlations (in the two lefthand columns of Table 5b) is largely

Table 5b

## Conditional Associations according to Race and Social Class

Dependent Variable			Working Class		Middle Class
	Black N=98	White N=244	Black N=77	White N=85	White N=159
Interest in Legislature T2	+.13	+.10	+.22	+.11	+.08
Interest in Legislature T3	+.20	+.07	+.32	+.03	+.07
Talking with Parents T2	+.08	+.10	+.10	+.09	+.09
Talking with Parents T3	+.21	+.16	+.32	+.20	+.13
Talking with Friends T2	+.07	+.12	+.08	+.13	+.12
Talking with Friends T3	+.29	+.16	+.34	+.03	+.22
Reading Legislature News T2	+.01	-.02	+.16	-.09	+.01
Reading Legislature News T3	+.14	+.11	+.26	+.17	+.10
National News Viewing T2	+.02	-.03	+.13	-.01	-.03
National News Viewing T3	-.09	-.07	+.02	-.05	-.09
Viewing Home Legislature T3	+.28	+.21	+.27	+.27	+.17
Attitude toward Legislators T2	+.13	+.07	+.14	+.11	+.04
Political Efficacy T2	+.13	+.12	+.09	+.11	+.11
Perception of Non-Secrecy T2	+.19	+.35	+.24	+.29	+.38
Basic Political Knowledge T2	+.18	+.32	+.36	+.31	+.31
Current Activities Knowledge T2	+.24	+.48	+.30	+.47	+.49
Structural Knowledge T2	+.42	+.50	+.50	+.46	+.52

absent from this more elaborated breakdown. This means that the weakest learning occurred among the middle-class blacks excluded from this particular analysis. This particular finding will remain undiscussed without further supportive research.

In addition to these interactions on general subject characteristics, conditional associations were also examined at high and low levels of ten politically relevant antecedent variables, all measured at the first test session, before any shows were seen. For each of these continuous variables, the overall sample was split near the median into two groups. This allows analysis of the relative impact of the legislature programs on subjects who differed in original knowledge, interest, efficacy, attitude, and communication behavior. The numerical values of the high vs. low classifications on the six most important variables are indicated in Table 6. The following paragraphs discuss the findings for each antecedent test variable.

Initial Knowledge. There were surprisingly small differences between the knowledge acquisition of the well-informed and poorly-informed subjects (Table 6a). Those who originally scored low on the general knowledge index learned slightly more than the more knowledgeable subjects. Since this occurred on the structural knowledge index as well as the general knowledge index, a ceiling effect explanation seems unlikely. The well-informed group showed the only increase in political efficacy, while experimental exposure was not related to efficacy among the poorly-informed subjects. On the other hand, the less knowledgeable group became more favorable toward the legislators, while the evaluations of the more knowledgeable subjects were not affected by the experiment.



Table 6a

Conditional Associations between Experimental Treatment and Dependent Variables,  
at High and Low Initial Levels of Political Knowledge and Interest

Dependent Variable	Low Knowledge (n=152)	High Knowledge (n=190)	Low Interest (n=236)	High Interest (n=106)
Interest in Legislature T2	+ .09	+ .10	+ .04	+ .23
Interest in Legislature T3	+ .14	+ .06	+ .07	+ .16
Reading Legis- lature News T2	- .09	+ .03	+ .02	- .09
Reading Legis- lature News T3	+ .12	+ .11	+ .08	+ .19
Watching Home Legislature T3	+ .26	+ .18	+ .20	+ .25
Attitude toward Legislators T2	+ .15	+ .02	+ .11	+ .03
Political Efficacy T2	+ .02	+ .18	+ .11	+ .15
Basic Political Knowledge T2	+ .33	+ .26	+ .28	+ .28
Current Activities Knowledge T2	+ .38	+ .44	+ .41	+ .45
Structural Knowledge T2	+ .53	+ .44	+ .47	+ .48

Low Knowledge = Score of 0-2 on Basic Political Knowledge Index at T1.

High Knowledge = Score of 3-10 on Basic Political Knowledge Index at T1.

Low Interest = Response of "Not" or "Little" on Interest in Legislature item at T1.

High Interest = Response of "Somewhat" or "Very" on Interest in Legislature item at T1.

Initial Interest. Those who were previously interested in the legislature further increased their interest due to the treatment, while the low interest group was little stimulated (Table 6a). Otherwise, the low interest and high interest students did not differ in their responses to the program series.

Initial Evaluation. Those who were originally least favorable in their evaluation of the legislators were the only ones who were positively affected by the programs, possibly because they had the most room for favorable change (Table 6b). They became more favorable toward the legislators, and increased in perceived political efficacy. However, the initially favorable subjects tended to acquire more knowledge.

Initial Efficacy. Subjects scoring high on the first efficacy index were the only ones stimulated to become more efficacious; the low efficacy subjects showed no effect on this variable (Table 6b). The former also became more interested in the legislature.

Initial Discussion. In general, those who previously discussed politics with parents and peers were affected more than non-talkers on the political interest variable (Table 6c). Other differences were very inconsistent, and interactions on untabled variables were not hypothesized.

On the last four antecedent factors, only a few interaction analyses were expected. Thus, the conditional associations between experimental treatment and dependent variables are described in the text rather than presented in tabular form.

Initial Viewing Plans. One-fourth of the students said at T1 that they expected to watch legislature programs at home. This group was only slightly influenced by the experimental treatment to watch at home after

Table 6b

Conditional Associations between Experimental Treatment and Dependent Variables,  
at High and Low Initial Levels of Efficacy and Attitude toward Legislators

Dependent Variable	Low Efficacy (n=206)	High Efficacy (n=136)	Low Attitude (n=205)	High Attitude (n=137)
Interest in Legislature T2	+.09	+.10	+.11	+.10
Interest in Legislature T3	+.03	+.17	+.05	+.20
Reading Legis- lature News T2	-.06	+.02	-.07	+.07
Reading Legis- lature News T3	+.09	+.14	+.07	+.20
Watching Home Legislature T3	+.19	+.23	+.23	+.19
Attitude Toward Legislators T2	+.04	+.10	+.17	-.04
Political Efficacy T2	+.02	+.17	+.16	+.05
Basic Political Knowledge T2	+.28	+.23	+.25	+.34
Current Activities Knowledge T2	+.38	+.45	+.35	+.52
Structural Knowledge T2	+.46	+.47	+.44	+.53

Low Efficacy = Score of 0-3 on Political Efficacy Index at T1.

High Efficacy = Score of 4-6 on Political Efficacy Index at T1.

Low Attitude = Score of 0-4 on Attitude toward Legislators Index at T1

High Attitude = Score of 5-6 on Attitude toward Legislators Index at T1.

Table 6c

Conditional Associations between Experimental Treatment and Dependent Variables,  
at High and Low Initial Levels of Talking with Parents and Peers

Dependent Variable	Low Parent Talking (n=173)	High Parent Talking (n=169)	Low Peer Talking (n=169)	High Peer Talking (n=173)
Interest in Legislature T2	+ .07	+ .16	+ .02	+ .20
Interest in Legislature T3	+ .09	+ .15	+ .13	+ .05
Talking with Parents T2	+ .09	+ .19	+ .05	+ .14
Talking with Parents T3	+ .19	+ .27	+ .20	+ .10
Talking with Friends T2	+ .16	+ .10	+ .15	+ .01
Talking with Friends T3	+ .09	+ .32	+ .25	+ .09
Watching Home Legislature T3	+ .20	+ .24	+ .22	+ .20

Low Talking = Response of "Almost Never" to the items asking about discussion of politics with parents or peers.

High Talking = Response of "Sometimes" or "Often" to the items asking about discussion of politics with parents or peers.

the in-school series was completed (+.06). More importantly, those reporting that they did not think they would watch at home were much more strongly stimulated to actually view afterwards (+.26).

Public TV Habits. There was little difference in post-experimental home viewing effects of the program series between subjects who had been heavier vs. lighter viewers of the local public television station (+.25 vs. +.18).

Initial Reading. Almost half of the subjects said they had almost never read newspaper stories about the legislature. The experimental treatment had no impact on their reading behavior (-.06 at T2 and +.03 at T3). There was a slight effect on those who previously read about the legislature (-.01 at T2 and +.17 at T3).

Initial News Viewing. About two-fifths of the students were fairly regular viewers of the national network news broadcasts. The experimental treatment did not differentially affect the two groups in national news viewing or home legislature viewing.

### Patterns of Intervening Influences Within Experimental Group

Five of the key dependent variables were measured at both the first and second testing sessions: basic political knowledge, interest in the legislature, attitude toward the legislators, political efficacy, and reading legislature news in the newspapers. The interrelationships among the experimental group change scores on these variables help determine intervening conditions which facilitate the impact of the program series on viewers. Below are the correlations among the T1 - T2 gain scores for the 176 subjects exposed to the programs who completed all three questionnaires:

	<u>Knowledge gain</u>	<u>Interest gain</u>	<u>Attitude gain</u>	<u>Efficacy gain</u>	<u>Reading gain</u>
Knowledge gain	--				
Interest gain	+ .16	--			
Attitude gain	+ .10	+ .24	--		
Efficacy gain	+ .06	+ .14	+ .15	--	
Reading gain	+ .09	+ .34	+ .19	- .10	--

These findings indicate that gains in interest and attitude play the most important role in producing changes on the other variables. Speculative causal inferences will be discussed in the final portion of this report.

### Self-Report Reactions to Program Viewing

After viewing the final video tape presentation of "Today in the Legislature," the experimental subjects completed a one-page evaluation sheet which probed their reactions to the program series. Table 7 presents the questions and distribution of responses.

Table 7

## Experimental Group Self-Report Reactions to Program Tape Series

In general, did you find the programs dull or interesting?

dull	26%
in between	62
interesting	12

In the shows, what things did you see that were most interesting? (open ended)  
What things that you saw were especially dull? (open ended)

	Interesting	Dull
18 year-old rights issue	32%	0%
other issues	17	16
debates, arguments	20	13
legislative procedures	7	13
no response	24	58

Do you think you:

learned a lot	23%
learned a little	59
didn't learn much	12
learned nothing	6

What kinds of things did you learn most about? (open ended)

debates and procedures	49%
issues and bills	17
no response	34

If you had a chance, would you like to see any more of these in school?

yes	60%
no	34
no response	6

Have you talked about these programs with anyone outside of school?

How many?		Who were they?	
nobody	27%	parents	36%
one-two	14	friends	25
three-four	9	siblings	4
five-six	13	someone else	4
seven or more	14	no response	31
no number specified	23		

N=284 students who viewed program tapes and completed post-experimental evaluation forms.

The students were not overly enchanted with the television coverage of the legislature. Only 12% found the programs "interesting," while twice as many felt that the shows were "dull." The majority fell into the "in between" category. Nevertheless, three-fifths said they would like to watch more of the programs in school.

Predictably, the 18-year-old rights issue attracted the most interest. The general debates and arguments were interesting to about one-fifth of the sample, but were identified as dull by one-eighth of the subjects. Almost half cited the process of debate and argumentation as the element of the series that they "learned most about." Most students reported learning something from the viewing experience: almost one-fourth felt that they "learned a lot" and three-fifths selected the "learned a little" category. The series stimulated three-fourths of the sample to discuss the programs outside of school, mainly with parents and peers.

The key variable of program attractiveness (along the interesting-dull dimension) was subjected to more extensive analyses. Table 8 shows that older students were more interested in the program series than younger students. Student characteristics such as race, sex, socio-economic status, and scholastic ability had little impact on interest in the television tapes. Subjects originally most interested in the legislature tended to find the programs more interesting. No other antecedent factors (media use, discussion, attitudes, or knowledge) were related to the interesting-dull evaluations.

Considering program attractiveness as an independent variable, Table 8 shows that subjects who found the series interesting increased their interest in the legislature itself. Favorable attitude change toward the



Table 8

## Experimental Group Correlates of Post-Viewing Program Interest Ratings

Variable:	Correlation with dull-interesting rating (Time 2)		
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Sex (male-female)	-.08		
Race (white-black)	+.06		
Age	+.22		
Social Class	-.05		
Grade Average	-.08		
Interest in Legislature	+.18	+.29	+.35
Talking with Parents	+.07	+.10	+.08
Talking with Friends	+.10	+.24	+.15
Reading Legislative News	+.11	+.11	+.19
Watching Legislature at Home		.	+.01
Attitude toward Legislators	.00	+.21	
Political Efficacy	.00	+.01	
Basic Political Knowledge	-.04	-.07	
Current Activities Knowledge		-.04	
Structural Knowledge		+.03	

N=176 students who viewed program tapes and completed questionnaires at all three sessions.

legislators was also related to program interest value. Post-viewing associations for talking with parents and talking with friends were stronger than were the T1 correlations. Unexpectedly, interest value ratings were unrelated to subsequent home viewing of public television coverage of the legislature. In another surprising finding, those who found the programs dull learned virtually the same amount on the knowledge indices as subjects who rated the programs as interesting.

#### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Let us begin this concluding section by summarizing what appear to be the key findings in this study. The myriad and complex analyses in the preceding section support the following tentative generalizations:

Exposure to the television public affairs series in the classroom facilitated--

1. Interest in the political system, an interest which emerged immediately after exposure to the series, and which persisted for an additional month, at least. This interest was found especially among the younger and black viewers. It increased among those with initially high interest, among those who had more initial belief in the efficacy of the political system, and among those who generally did more interpersonal talking about politics. This accelerated level of political interest also appeared to spur positive increments in other political socialization variables.

2. Interpersonal discussion about politics with parents and with friends. Although somewhat more delayed in emerging, higher levels of interpersonal political interaction persisted at the delayed test wave, and were a clear effect of the series exposure. More political talking

was particularly evident among the black youngsters and the more politically informed youth.

3. Related reading of state legislative news in the newspaper, largely among black youngsters.

4. Voluntary exposure to shows in the public affairs series, after involuntary classroom exposure had ceased.

5. More favorable attitudes toward the state legislators in general, but particularly in terms of the perceived trustworthiness of those politicians. It was the older students who showed the most gain, as well as those who originally were less favorably inclined and who were originally less knowledgeable about the political system. This increase in positiveness was also determined to be a significant intervening influence, i.e., changes in this attitude appeared to contribute to changes on related socialization variables. In like fashion, Governor Askew profited from his TV exposure to these youngsters.

6. Greater belief that the Florida legislature did not function in secrecy. The series served to reduce beliefs of secrecy in government, particularly among the white, middle-class viewers.

7. Greater political knowledge, whether the measure was of general political knowledge, or knowledge of current legislative activities, or knowledge about how the legislature works. There was a highly significant experimental effect, and it was most prominent among the younger, white students who performed better in school.

Exposure to the television series was unrelated, in this study, to such major socialization phenomena as:

1. Political efficacy, where unexpected Time 1 differences existed between the experimental and control subjects. Further, control analyses gave no suggestion of an impact on this belief.

2. Reading or watching of national news.

An examination of this pattern of effects indicates that cognitive variables were most generally affected, while some more basic affective orientations were more resistant to change. Exposure to the program series increased legislature knowledge levels by approximately one-third. A change of similar magnitude occurred on the cognitive perception of legislature non-secrecy.

Impact on affect, interest, and communication was less pronounced, although many significant differences were found. These changes were primarily on measures closely related to the subject matter of the program series. For instance, attitude toward Florida legislators changed, but general political efficacy did not; newspaper reading about the legislature was substantially greater but general newspaper and television news exposure was not. In sum, the basic attitudes and behaviors were not altered; the effect focused on specific legislature-relevant variables. The only seeming exception was political discussion, and it may well be the case that this increased discussion with family and peers was about the TV series being seen in school.

This summary does not sufficiently identify certain clusters of behaviors after exposure which were clearly sub-group behaviors. The set of political interest and communication variables--political interest, talking reading--were all especially impactful on the younger viewers, the 9th graders, and on the black youngsters. Indeed, it was this last grouping

of young people who appeared to profit the most from the TV series, in terms of instilling an interest and a discussion level not heretofore present. This effect is noteworthy, given the lack of any significant same-race figures in the series.

For two other distinct clusters of variables--attitudes toward legislators and personal feelings of political effectiveness--the older, 11th grade, students gained the most. Some distinctive amount of skepticism was eliminated as a result of this rather mild experience with political television.

The final set of variables, all the knowledge indices, had its maximum effects on the younger viewers and the white ones. The younger students had the most to learn perhaps, and the white ones found it easier, or more germane.

At best, these differential clusterings of effects may show that a single public affairs television series can expect to impact with varying degrees of success on young viewers in different stages of political socialization. And the age range of the study group was limited compared to what might be contemplated if this type of series were given in-school availability across wider age/grade segments.

It is important to note before leaving this clustering effect that virtually no sex differences, and certainly no consistent ones, were observed. The traditional expectation that politics is the man's role may be deteriorating, or was not yet present for the age groups studied. One should note that the series shows did feature women in prominent roles, in committees, in public appearances before the legislature, and in lengthy debates over an equal rights amendment. This emphasis on women in politics may well have

served to deter, for the female subjects, inhibiting notions about a more limited role for women in politics. Although general exposure to public affairs information may be higher among boys, as repeated studies have shown, when exposure is equal or controlled the impact may not be very different on young women.

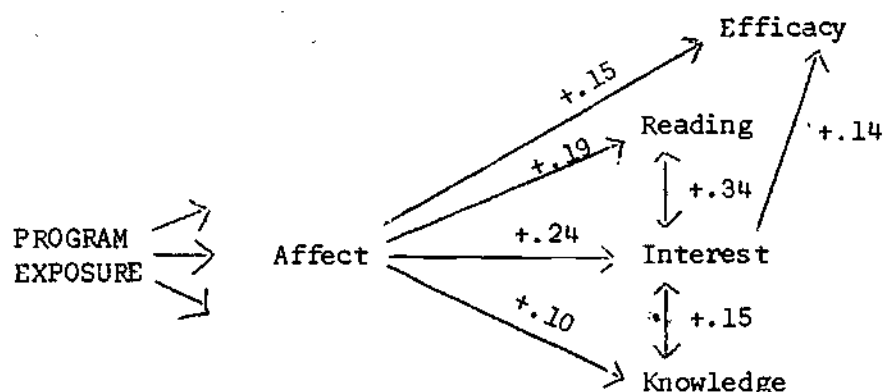
It is important to note that the impact of the "Today in the Legislature" series was rather uniform across students differing in scholastic ability, political interest, and communication behavior. One might expect that such public affairs programming might not reach and influence the less bright and less interested students. However, these sub-categories of viewers did learn as much as those with greater ability and involvement in politics. It seems likely that the nature of the television presentations was an important factor contributing to the generality of effects across varied subgroups. The finding that antecedent variables tended to be unrelated to program reactions along the interesting-dull dimension suggests that the programming attracted all types of students equally.

We also want to discuss the evidence concerning flows of causality among the intervening variables. Panel analyses can be applied to the data in this study to determine how changes in one variable affect changes in others. The matrix of intercorrelations presented in the results section shows the basic pattern of associations between change scores on five key variables measured at both Time 1 and Time 2. The main question involves the direction of causality within each pair of variables. In many cases, one variable conceptually precedes or contributes to the other; in a few cases, the causal flow is doubtful or reciprocal. One means of testing the relative contribution of each variable in a pairing is to examine cross-

lagged correlations of the two variables between Time 1 and Time 2 levels (Chaffee, Ward and Tipton, 1970). Using this procedure to resolve questions of directionality, we can infer that the one variable in each of the pairings is clearly the greater influence in all but two cases (interest-reading, and interest-knowledge, where the pairs appear to be reciprocal). The chart below orders the pairings from the strongest to weakest change score correlations, with the likely causal variable listed first in each pair:

+.34	Interest-Reading
+.24	Affect-Interest
+.19	Affect-Reading
+.16	Interest-Knowledge
+.15	Affect-Efficacy
+.14	Interest-Efficacy
+.10	Affect-Knowledge
+.09	Knowledge-Reading
+.06	Knowledge-Efficacy
-.10	Efficacy-Reading

Ignoring those relationships below +.10 as insignificant, a tentative model of influence among intervening variables can be proposed in this form:



From this, the impact of the televised series of legislature programs appears to be mediated primarily by affective reactions to the legislators: to the extent that evaluations become more positive, increases in interest, reading, efficacy and knowledge occur. Thus, the conduct of the legislators

in their television appearances may be a crucial factor in determining how the students become socialized from this programming. Increases in interest also seem to play an important role: interest contributes to reading, knowledge, and efficacy. The other three variables do not appear to facilitate program influence, except to the extent that they enter into reciprocal relationships with interest. An alternative model might pair affect and interest as primary mediators--from which the other variables derive their stimulus for change.

It should be pointed out that many of these linkages are quite weak, and that the program series probably had a fairly direct impact on each variable regardless of intervening changes on other variables. In addition, variables we did not measure at both sessions are not included in the model. Nevertheless, this analysis gives some indication of the complex pattern of indirect flows of influence which may have resulted from classroom exposure.

The main effects results may also serve to partly dispel one of the more persistent myths about television, that people will watch only what they have become accustomed to watch. Few, if any, of these youngsters were initially avid viewers of public affairs programs; probably equally few were avid viewers after the study. Nevertheless, those who had been exposed to six hour-long programs, over a 6-week period, did choose to do some further watching of this same series on their own. Three-fifths of them stated that they would like to see more of these shows in the classroom as well. Twelve percent found the shows "interesting," and one is uncertain whether to say 'only 12%' or 'fully 12%.' Surely, if this initial interest and viewing behavior persisted over time, then both public television and the political process might well profit from increased public participation.



Outside of the classroom, youngsters are lukewarm attenders to public affairs information. The largest bulk, perhaps one-half to three-fourths, may at best do occasional watching of news and public affairs, and about the same portion have nearly regular readership of the front page of a newspaper. No more than one-fourth are regular fans of such content. This level of attention increases somewhat from late elementary school years through senior high school. This exposure is related to increased political knowledge and campaign activity. To the extent these are socially desirable behaviors then exposure to the kinds of cognitive and affective information available in this TV series may serve to facilitate or accelerate the political socialization process. It may facilitate it by making available information in an attractive, easy-to-assimilate package. It may accelerate it by making it available to groups of young people much earlier than they would normally either receive it or perhaps want to, if packaged in more traditional ways.

These results would seem to have some important implications for the formal learning process and its contribution to political socialization. Some theorists, e.g., Hess and Torney (1967), argue that the school is a principal political socializer. If the role of the school as an agent of socialization is through its course materials, there is little evidence to support that proposition. Several 1960's studies on the impact of formal in-school civics training yield bland results, at best, and a more recent study (Langton and Jennings, 1968) provided extensive documentation for the minimal effects conclusion.

In tandem with those findings is the evidence that the teaching of social studies, including civics, citizenship, etc., by conventional instructional television processes is as effective in terms of learning information

as conventional classroom instruction (Chu and Schramm, 1967). We have used the term conventional deliberately to describe both those modes, inasmuch as the bulk of instructional television in such experiments consisted of televising the classroom instructor doing what he normally does, but in front of a camera.

Even more recently, one school has experimented with using the newspaper as a replacement for, and not a supplement for, traditional classroom texts. The newspaper material was used for instruction in current affairs, mathematics, sociology, and a variety of other subjects. Early results indicate that the use of this mass medium was eminently successful, and with youngsters who were not effectively learning through traditional classroom methods (Lansing State Journal, 1973). Newspapers as a supplement to existing classroom materials have generally been shown to increase public affairs knowledge (Diederich and Maskovsky, 1970).

If one melds these ideas with the possible availability of a televised public affairs series, such as the Florida legislature series, then the focal point of this discussion may become manifest. The television material would appear to be a useful supplement for civics instruction, capable of expansion and interpretation by the classroom instructor. This combination would be expected to result in more thorough political socialization of young people, particularly in terms of knowledge, interest, related communication behaviors, and perhaps in a yen for greater political activity.

Further, there is reason to speculate that the merging of textbook and classroom information with current affairs information from television may have complementary effects. Langton and Jennings (1968) showed that civics classes, traditionally taught, impacted differently on advantaged and

disadvantaged youngsters. Their findings were in part opposite to the findings of the present study.

Langton and Jennings showed that political knowledge from civics classes increased more so among the black students, as did political interest and efficacy. White students in those classes gained more in increased political discussion behaviors and added use of newspapers, magazines and TV for public affairs information.

The study reported here demonstrated that political knowledge did increase among the black students, but the increase was even greater among their white counterparts. It was the black students whose interest, political talking and news reading about state affairs showed the sharpest upturn.

Why the difference? One plausible explanation may be in the relative orientation of more and less advantaged youngsters toward the television medium. The latter use television more, and specifically do so for purposes of social learning, e.g., to find out what life is like. This is not the same as the learning of specific factual information. The less advantaged child appears to be motivated more so to seek socially useful aspects of media content, so he has something to talk about and for interests to develop, and less so for cognitive learning aspects. This may reflect a difference between what one expects to get from a classroom and what one expects to get from television, however false the information-entertainment argument may in reality be. But the anticipated differences may be maximal between greater and lesser fans of the medium.

Obviously, only further research can test such notions. But, if these complementary functions do exist, it is most important to suggest here that the combination of the two modes of learning about public affairs should

maximize political socialization among both sub-groups of youngsters and minimize sub-group differences. Effectively combining the live teacher with text with the nearly-live television coverage of government affairs should facilitate political socialization behaviors among all students, this reasoning would contend. All this serves to support the argument that making additional political areas open to television coverage, e.g., Congress, may make for a more generally informed, interested, and participatory public posture, commencing earlier in life.

Not wishing to serve as critics, nevertheless, this televised series was a first such attempt by this creative and production staff. A second effort would likely be even more professionally and creatively done. Interest and favorability toward the series could be increased, and the anticipated effects even more prevalent. One might speculate that these significant findings do not represent a maximal output, and that a renewed effort could be even more contributory to the political socialization of young people. Expanding the number of programs seen, incorporating classroom discussion, reading newspapers as well, all seem viable procedures for increasing the observed effects. In the experimental test of this series, none of these relevant activities were permitted. The effects for the series, as tested, are relatively dramatic ones; however, they should be interpreted as a baseline set of effects which could be extended for a more inclusive effort at political socialization.

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